

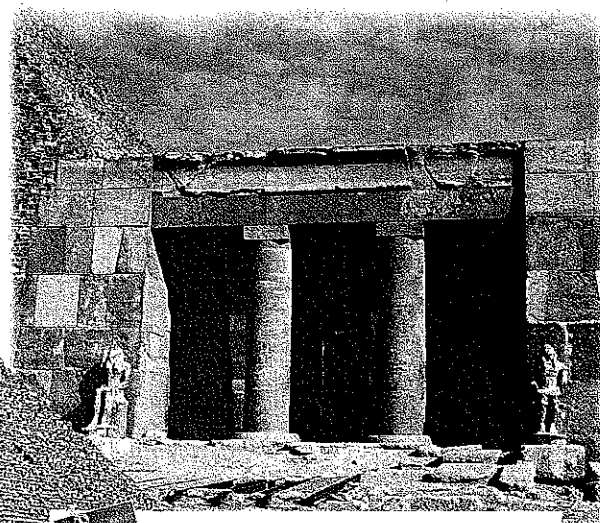
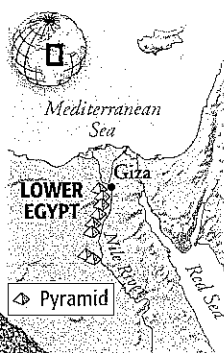
At first, members of the pharaoh's family aided in running the country. During the Old Kingdom, however, a government bureaucracy—an administrative organization with officials and regular procedures—developed. Especially important was the office of vizier, the “steward of the whole land.” Directly responsible to the pharaoh, the vizier was in charge of the government bureaucracy. In time, Egypt was divided into 42 provinces, which were run by governors appointed by the pharaoh. Each governor was responsible to the pharaoh and vizier.

The Pyramids One of the great achievements of Egyptian civilization, the building of pyramids, occurred in the time of the Old Kingdom. Pyramids were built as part of a larger complex of buildings dedicated to the dead—in effect, a city of the dead. The area included several structures: a large pyramid for the pharaoh's burial; smaller pyramids for his family; and several mastabas, rectangular structures with flat roofs used as tombs for the pharaoh's officials.

The tombs were well prepared for their residents. They contained rooms stocked with

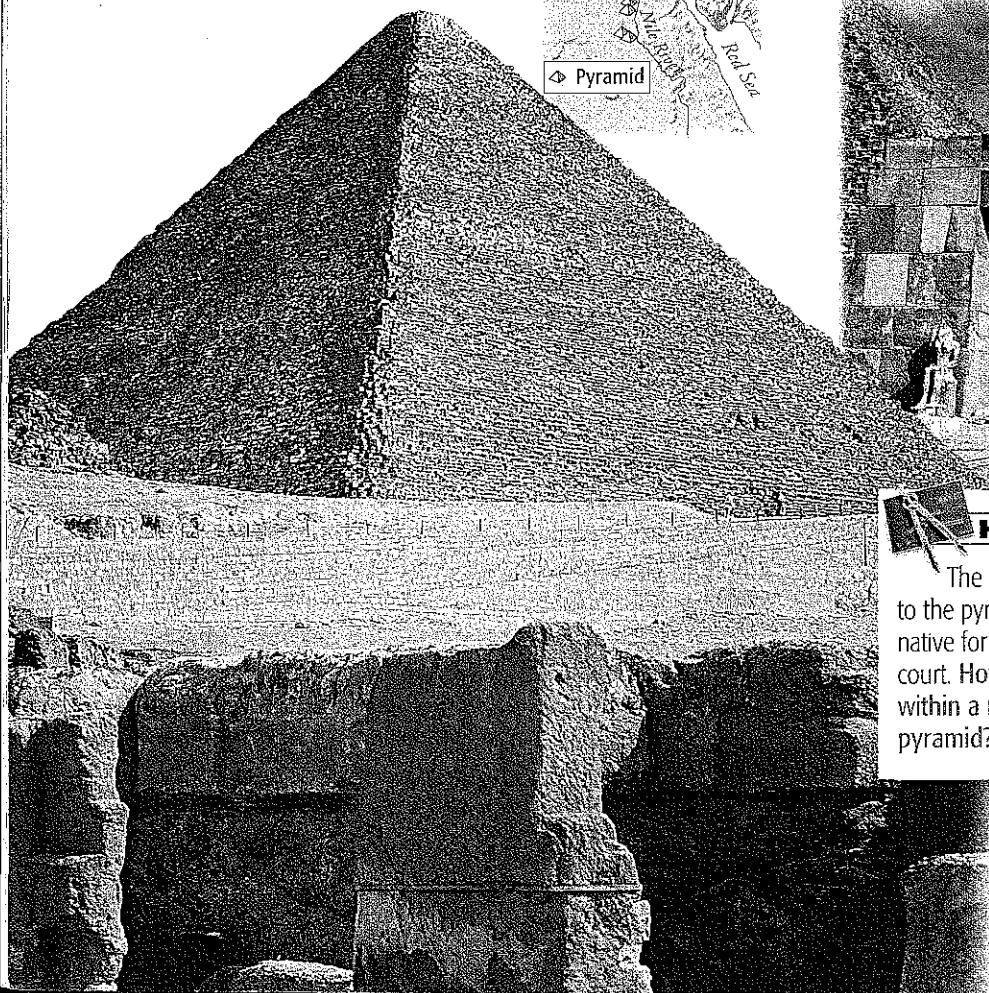
supplies, including chairs, boats, chests, weapons, games, dishes, and a variety of foods. The Egyptians believed that human beings had two bodies—a physical one and a spiritual one, which they called the *ka*. If the physical body was properly preserved and the tomb furnished with all the various objects of regular life, the *ka* could return. Surrounded by earthly comforts, the *ka* could then continue its life despite the death of the physical body.

To preserve the physical body after death, the Egyptians practiced mummification, a process of slowly drying a dead body to prevent it from rotting. This process took place in workshops run by priests, primarily for the wealthy families who could afford it. Workers first removed the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines and placed them in four special jars that were put in the tomb with the mummy. The priests also removed the brain by extracting it through the nose. They then covered the corpse with a natural salt that absorbed the body's water. Later, they filled the body with spices and wrapped it with layers of linen soaked in resin. At the end of the process, which had taken about 70 days, a lifelike mask was placed over the head and shoulders of the mummy. The mummy was then sealed in a case and placed in its tomb.



History through Architecture

The mastaba (above) was the forerunner to the pyramid (left) and a simpler burial alternative for people who were not part of the royal court. How would the artifacts and paintings within a mastaba differ from those in a pyramid?



Picturing History

The mummy of Ramses II (the Great) has remained intact for 3,000 years. Ramses was nearly 90 when he died. What might medical investigators discover about Egyptian life from this mummy?



Pyramids were tombs for the mummified bodies of pharaohs. The largest and most magnificent of all the pyramids was built under King Khufu (KOO•FOO). Constructed at Giza around 2540 B.C., the famous Great Pyramid of King Khufu covers 13 acres (5.3 ha), measures 756 feet (230 m) at each side of its base, and stands 481 feet (147 m) high.

The building of the Great Pyramid was an enormous construction project. The Greek historian Herodotus reported the traditional story that it took 100,000 Egyptians 20 years to build the Great Pyramid. Herodotus wrote two thousand years after the event, however, and much speculation still surrounds the building of the Great Pyramid. Especially puzzling is how the builders achieved their amazing level of precision. The stone slabs on the outside of the Great Pyramid, for example, fit so closely side by side that even a hair cannot be pushed into the joints between them.

Guarding the Great Pyramid at Giza is a huge statue carved from rock, known as the Great Sphinx. This colossal statue is 240 feet (73 m) long and 66 feet (20 m) high. It has the body of a lion and a human head. The head is believed by many to be a likeness of Khufu's son Khafre, who ordered the statue's construction. Historians do not agree on the purpose of the Great Sphinx. Many Egyptians, however, believed that the mythical sphinx was an important guardian of sacred sites.

The Great Pyramid still stands as a visible symbol of the power of the Egyptian pharaohs of the Old Kingdom. No pyramid built later matched its size or splendor. The pyramid was not only the pharaoh's tomb but also an important symbol of royal power. It

could be seen for miles and served to remind people of the glory, might, and wealth of the ruler who was a living god on Earth.

The Middle Kingdom The Old Kingdom eventually collapsed, followed by a period of chaos that lasted about 150 years. Finally, a new royal dynasty gained control of all Egypt and began the Middle Kingdom, a period of stability lasting from about 2050 to 1652 B.C. Egyptians later portrayed the Middle Kingdom as a golden age—an age of stability.

As evidence of its newfound strength, Egypt began a period of expansion. Nubia, which was located south of Egypt, was conquered. Fortresses were built to protect the new southern frontier. The government sent armies into Palestine and Syria, although they did not remain there. Pharaohs also sent traders to Kush, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Crete.

One feature of the Middle Kingdom was a new concern of the pharaohs for the people. In the Old Kingdom, the pharaoh had been seen as a god-king far removed from his people. Now he was portrayed as the shepherd of his people and expected to build public works and provide for the public welfare. Pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom undertook a number of helpful projects. The draining of swampland in the Nile Delta provided thousands of acres of new farmland. The digging of a canal to connect the Nile to the Red Sea aided trade and transportation.

The New Kingdom The Middle Kingdom came to an end around 1652 B.C. with the invasion of Egypt